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The Rescue of French Jews during the Second World War as Reflected in Two Novels: *The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah and *the Velvet Hours* by Alyson Richman

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Abstract

Two primary concepts are usually mentioned when analyzing the attitude of the French towards the Jews during the Second World War: anti-Semitism and rescue. Paldiel divides the types of help offered by the rescuers during the Second World War into four: a hiding place, impersonating a non-Jew, escape, and helping children. The two novels, *The Nightingale* and *The Velvet Hours* were written at around the same time and share many common themes: rigid father-daughter relations, becoming orphaned, unwanted pregnancy, and pioneering women leaders. The ethnic origin of both authors is also the same, but the primary purpose of this article is to discuss the setting of both novels: the Second World War; in France, and the heroic deed occurring in the two books: saving Jews from the threat of the Nazi invader. We will examine each book separately and then discuss the points common to both – points that will evolve into a discussion and conclusions.

Keywords: Righteous Among the Nations, rescue of Jews, the Holocaust, Jews of France, *The Nightingale*, *The Velvet Hours*, Second World War

1. Literature Review

1.1 Historical Background Regarding the Situation of the Jews of France during the Second World War

There is disagreement regarding how many Jews were living in France when the war broke out. Estimates lie between 320,000 and 350,000 (Latour, 1970). The entry of German forces into northern France was immediately accompanied by anti-Jewish activity and intense Nazi propaganda. They attempted to instill anti-Semitism in the indigenous population through booklets and newspapers. From August 1940, Jews were required to register with the police, their businesses had signs posted noting their race, economic activities were banned, and arrests soon began, with the prisoners taken to the Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers internment camps. The arrests, even though initially only for adults, mainly men, broke up families and resulted in thousands of children being on the streets. The children were not yet in danger of immediate arrest and deportation, but they were exposed to the dangers of hunger, sickness, and loneliness (Poznanski, 2000). The rescuing, in most cases, was expressed in hiding Jews in the rescuer's house or yard, usually by building a bunker inside the house or a storeroom, and those hiding were forced to stay inside for weeks, months, or even years, without seeing the light of day. Food supply was particularly problematical due to war shortages, and the poor and needy rescuer sometimes shared his small portion of bread with those he was saving. This type of rescue was potentially the most dangerous due to frequent searches for people in hiding, and sometimes betrayal by people collaborating with the Germans. The ObshchetsvoZdravooKhraneniyaYevreyiev (OZE – The Organization for Jewish Health) founded ten children's care centers in Paris between June 1940 and July 1942 (Szajkovski, 1968). They were official, under the supervision of the UGIF (Union Generale des Israelites de France). Camp conditions were harsh: overcrowding in the barracks; lack of sanitary conditions; insufficient and inadequate food; outbreaks of disease and sickness – together with an assortment of people of various origins and ages, including hundreds of children (Weill, 1946). In June 1942, each person received a daily food portion of only 950 calories. The Jewish prisoners' suffering was indescribable, particularly that of parents who saw their children dying of hunger and cold without having any way of saving them. A struggle also had to be conducted against the Vichy government for them to agree to release the children (Szajkovski, 1966). In August 1942 the raids began on the Jews in the south, and saving the children from such raidsbecamea question of life or death.

Two primary concepts are usually mentioned when analyzing the attitude of the French towards the Jews during the

Second World War: anti-Semitism and rescue (Poznanski, 2000). The historic context of the first concept, the *longue durée* – the development of French anti-Semitism, was mainly ideological. The second concept refers only to the period of the Occupation. Some studies describe the French as anti-Semites and collaborators in implementing the various steps to deportation and expulsion. The study later describes them as at best apathetic, and at worst, pleased about the Jews' deportation from France. However, other researchers understand that the rescue projects made possible thanks to the French nation's attitude towards the Jews in opposition to that of the state, can explain how around three-quarters of the Jewish population in France succeeded in escaping the fate the Germans had planned for them. These studies enable us to sketch a fairly accurate picture of the French people's attitudes towards the Jews, and place them within the wider context of the various problems with which the French public was occupied during the war years.

1.2 The Image of the Rescuers – Types of Help

According to Paldiel (1998), we can divide the types of help offered by the rescuers during the Second World War into four: a hiding place, impersonating a non-Jew, escape, and helping children.

1. Providing a hiding place – this was the most common help. The person was hidden somewhere in the rescuer's home, or nearby, in a secluded and well-concealed corner, in a way that no one would think anyone was hiding there.
2. Impersonating a non-Jew – helping a Jew impersonate a non-Jew; that is, helping him adopt a non-Jewish sounding, fictitious name, help in inventing a life story, and teaching him local habits, particularly the customs of the religion common to that place. Likewise, helping Jews obtain various identification documents, including birth or baptism certificates, and finding suitable employment and housing.
3. Escape and smuggling – helping Jews escape from a more dangerous place to a then less dangerous one, in areas controlled by the Nazis or their collaborators, or help in illegally crossing the border, to places such as Switzerland, Sweden (ships from Denmark or crossing the mountains from Norway), to areas under Italian rule or Hungary (until March 1944), or in ships from Greece to Turkey.
4. Children in hiding – when parents were deported to the camps, they went into hiding, dressed up as non-Jews, or fled from one place to another – in each of these cases, parents and children needed to be separated to save the children. Sometimes the arrangements were made early, with the parents making agreements with friends or a children's home and/ or a monastery, that the child would be accepted and adopted until the end of the war. Those gentiles who saved Jewish children, usually by adopting them as their own child, and the heads of monasteries who hid Jewish children in the monasteries, and returned them to their families at the end of the war are also entitled to be called Righteous Among the Nations.

1.3 The Image of the Rescuers – Their Personalities: Ethics of Responsibility

Sartre (1988) emphasizes the important place of the value of responsibility as the center of the socially developed personality. "Man is the result of his actions". He is tested by his deeds, rather than his hallucinations or thoughts. Sartre also derives responsibility for others from self-responsibility, and notes that a person with both kinds of responsibility is the ideal man. Golomb (1990) emphasizes human obligation towards humanity in general. Rogers (1979) speaks about the meaning of freedom as inner freedom, as the ability to be with myself, as a courageous trait that prepares a person to willingly walk towards the uncertain. Frankl (2000) views taking responsibility as the essence of man's existence. The basis of logotherapy is "Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now!" (Frankl, 2000, p. 109). Such a directive encourages responsibility because it makes a person weigh the results of his potential actions as if for the second time. The emotional approach positions the Other and the concern for him in the center. Lévinas (1995) based his entire theory of morality on the concept of responsibility towards others, and claimed that it precedes forming self-identity and responsibility. The moment we stand facing the Other, we feel responsibility for him. Lévinas argued that there is no significance to freedom without the responsibility we have towards the Other, because responsibility is an objective and freedom can derive only from such an objective. We don't choose the Other or the group, but rather the Other dictates responsibility to us, simply by the fact that he is there. Our being ethical humans forces us to worry about others, whether or not we have chosen to do so.

Gilligan (1982), Gur-Ze'ev (1999), and Noddings (2005), characterize female ethics and responsibility in contrast to those of males. They argue that women do not understand ethical dilemmas according to rules, social norms, or ethical rules, but through emotions of concern and empathy towards others. Gilligan began a revolution in understanding ethics in her book, *In a Different Voice*, when distinguishing between male and female philosophies of ethics. The concern for a relationship is the feminine voice and its connection with the world. In contrast, the male voice is concerned with

creating limits, separation, autonomy, independence, and freedom. Boys develop by games involving skills, organization, and controlled competitions. Girls sacrifice competition for cooperation, and recognize the Other as a different person. The feminine ethical dilemma emanates from conflicts concerning responsibility to others, rather than a clash between contending rights. Women solve problems by telling stories rather than through formal reasoning. Gilligan argues that ethical dilemmas must also be derived from the feminine world of identifying with others and friendship. Recognition of the validity of the feminine position on ethical development is recognition of the importance of the connection between the Self and the Other, and the universality of compassion and concern. Being ethical is taking responsibility without defining rights. Women solve ethical dilemmas by practical, rather than fundamental, judgment – they judge according to the difference in circumstances and not a categorical command. Understanding their world reflects a less violent life structure, and more relationships of dependency and caring. Noddings (2005) calls Kant's universal laws of ethics the "language of the father", and cries out that the mothers' voice, that is a voice of care and sensitivity, attentiveness and support, is not heard. The approach of Noddings and Gilligan is based on concern and responsibility for the Other, but unlike that of L évinas, it calls for reciprocal responsibility. Situations exist in which it is possible to escape from responsibility, using someone's worldview. Adoption of a determinist perspective, excuses, justifications, and rationalism (Golomb, 1990), lead – according to existentialism – to self-deception and denial of responsibility. Another philosophy of avoiding responsibility is that of Skinner (1973) and behaviorism. If we all act due to constraints and reinforcements outside our control, that means we have no free choice, and are therefore free of responsibility. Skinner argues that a person lacks control, and that it is a mistake to ignore how external factors control our lives – such disregard invites a Holocaust (Skinner, 1973). Rogers (1961) claims that Skinner's theory creates a nightmarish world in which a person can be manipulated, turning him into a terrifying automat. For Rogers, Skinner's beliefs that spontaneity, freedom, responsibility, and free choice do not really exist and are just an illusion, are unacceptable, and a skinnerite world will destroy humanity.Oakley (1992) argues that the more we anticipate the results, the more responsible we are for our emotions, and even if we can't control them, we bear responsibility if we don't try and prevent our feelings, by controlling the initial conditions and thereby avoiding emotion. Responsibility for emotions is therefore dependent on responsibility for our character and character traits, the steps and actions that we choose, and anticipating their results. Our ability to re-examine our feelings gives us responsibility, and even that is only retrospective responsibility (Gonen, 2003). Buber (1962) connected the conscience to responsibility, and warned against running away from personal responsibility to the wider collectivity. Meaning, to create a collective conscience that shows concern for others, a person first needs an individual conscience full of content that can oppose the collective, mass conscience that shirks real responsibility (Buber, 1959). Haffner (2002) left Germany in 1938, feeling disgust towards his nation. He only returned in 1954. He didn't publish his book during his lifetime, and his son published it posthumously. Haffner writes about people losing their individual identity in exchange for a collective one. He argues that the Germans' personal happiness emanated from a feeling of belonging to the nation. The entire content of their lives, even if it was terrible, was provided by the community. Haffner claims that nationalism is undoubtedly a dangerous spiritual disease. A German who becomes a nationalist stops being a German and stops being humane.

> He does what everyone else does. He doesn't have time to think about it. His conscience is "my friends". There is a common solidarity between people as people, with every person bearing responsibility for every wrong-doing or injustice in the world, particularly regarding crimes in his presence or with his knowledge. When I don't do everything I can to prevent them, I share the blame. If I don't risk my life to prevent the murder of others, but stand by, full of guilt that cannot be properly understood, legally, politically, or ethically. The fact that I am still alive after such an occurrence is ineradicable guilt for me (Haffner, 2002, pp. 186-187).

2. Methodology

The two novels, *The Nightingale* (2015) and *The Velvet Hours* (2016) were written at around the same time and,as already noted, share many common themes. Studying both books invites an investigation regarding all the common details, and, the focus of this article – the characters of two rescuers of Jews during the Second World War. We will examine each book separately and then discuss the points common to both – points that will evolve into a discussion and conclusions.

2.1 The Article's Goal

To compare two novels, *The Nightingale* and *The Velvet Hours* and discover the differences between the two regarding the rescue of French Jews during the Holocaust, as viewed by two contemporary American authors and as expressed in the plots they created and the characters of the women rescuers – their personalities, motives, and human traits.

3. Findings

3.1 The Nightingale

The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah was published in 2015.

The narrative begins with a story set in contemporary Oregon, with the firsthand account of a sick, old woman who finds a shoebox in the attic. When she opens it, she sees the identity card of Juliette Gervaise, and the memories engulf her. She reads an invitation she receives to come to France for a reunion in honor of the nightingale, again and again. The reader will yet will yet return to the present several times throughout the book, but it will take time until he understands who Juliette Gervaise is and her connection to the enigmatic figure, who "the nightingale" of the title is, and primarily – the reader will not know which of the two sisters is speaking until the last three pages. The author succeeds in gripping the reader until the end of the book, even if she manages to guess the riddle of the speaker's identity before then.

The main story is told from the perspective of a narrator who knows everything. He tells the story of two sisters in France. The older, Vianne, lives in the old family home in Carriveau. She is married with a daughter – Sophie. The second, Isabelle, is eighteen when the novel begins. She is a non-conformist who has run away from several schools during her childhood, cannot accept authority and is searching for the lost love of her family. She is a feminist who sees before her the image of a First World War heroine who succeeded in saving people as a nurse, and she wants to be like her, but something goes wrong. Her mother died when she was a small child, and she barely remembers anything about her. After her death her father rejected his two daughters due to the shellshock he experienced during the First World War. Isabelle's sister, Vianne, cannot get over her mother's death and father's rejection, and cannot protect and accept her younger sister. Thus, there is tension between the two that makes life difficult for both.

At the beginning of the war, when Germany invades France, Vianne's husband, Antoine, is sent to a labor camp. She stays with her daughter, Sophie, at home, worrying, and continues teaching at the local school. While running away, Isabelle encounters a man who will help her reach her sister's house. During their flight, they learn about the horrors of the war, and Isabelle decides to join the Resistance. She becomes an underground figure who will later help British and American pilots escape by crossing the border so that they will be able to return and bomb the Germans. Isabelle's character is based on that of Andr ée de Jongh, a Belgian woman who helped air pilots flee from the Nazis.

When the war drags on, Vianne, the conformist and conservative, also gradually discovers the horrors of the war: the hunger, terrible cold, unending humiliation, and a German soldier who breaks into her home and threatens to kill her. She experiences emotional turmoil when she is witness to executions in the city center, the deportation of the Jews, and of her best friend. And she herself is personally hurt, being raped by the SS officer who lives in her home, so that the son of her Jewish friend, who was taken to the extermination camps, can continue living in her house:

> He took both of her hands and wrenched them over her head, pinning them to the wall with one gloved hand. "Please," she said, "don't..."
>
> She knew instantly that it was a mistake to beg.
>
> "I checked the records. There is only one child born to you and Antoine. A girl, Sophie. You buried others. Who is the boy?"
>
> Vianne was too frightened to think clearly. All she knew for sure was that she couldn't tell the truth or Daniel would be deported. And God knew what they'd do to Vianne... to Sophie. "Antoine's cousin died giving birth to Daniel. We adopted the baby just before the war started. You know how difficult official paperwork is these days, but I have his birth certificate and baptismal papers. He's our son now."
>
> "Your nephew, then. Blood but not blood. Who's to say his father isn't a communist? Or Jewish?"
>
> Vianne swallowed convulsively. He didn't suspect the truth. "We're Catholic. You know that."
>
> "What would you do to keep him here with you?"
>
> "Anything," she said. (pp. 368-9).

Vianne, quiet, frightened, and obedient, walked between the raindrops not to stand out, until the moment that changed her life, in which she changed from a woman working to save one Jewish child to working to save many Jewish children, endangering her own life and that of her daughter:

> In the last few months, Vianne had learned about pain and shame and degradation. She knew about survival, too – how to gauge Von Richter's moods and when to stay out of his way and when to be silent. Sometimes, if she did everything just right, he barely saw her. (p. 384).

Kristin Hannah uses a novel to describe the events that changed the history of France, and thereby allows the reader a rare glimpse into the world of women during the war. This is the story of lives prematurely ending, fear, courage, and the human spirit that never gives up.When France utterly changes, and everything is full of the terror of war, the two sisters' paths separate. From now onwards, each will need to fight her own war of survival.In her own way, and in light of the events she experiences, quiet Vianne is revealed as strong and courageous. And in her own way, she participates in the civilian struggle and is involved with rescuing children whose parents were deported, murdered, or didn't survive.The story of the war and her family, Vianne, the surviving sister, will later tell to her family.

Vianne's rescuing testifies that for a person to have the ethics of responsibility does not require them to belong to the same nation or even be religious. The most famous deed of kindness of a woman from another people to a Jew was that of Pharaoh's daughter, who saved baby Moses, named him, and protected him during his childhood after adopting him as her own son (Exodus 2). In fact, Pharaoh's daughter was the first Righteous Among the Nations. The description of Vianne's separation from Ari, her friend's son, is particularly poignant and demonstrates the tragedy of all the children who were saved during the Second World War:

> "M'sieurMontand," the Red Cross worker said, "this woman has information on some Jewish children." The old man looked up at her through bloodshot eyes... "Come in."... Vianne approached the desk. Her hands were damp with perspiration. She rubbed them along the sides of her skirt. "I am Vianne Mauriac. From Carriveau." She opened her handbag and withdrew the list she had compiled last night from the three lists she'd kept throughout the war. She set it on his desk. "These are some hidden Jewish children, M'sieur. They are in the Abbaye de la Trinité orphanage under the care of Mother Superior Marie-Therese. I don't know how to reunite them with their parents. Except for the first name on the list. Ari de Champlain is with me. I am searching for his parents."
>
> "Nineteen children," he said quietly.
>
> "It is not many, I know, but..."
>
> He looked up at her as if she were a heroine, instead of a scared survivor. "It is nineteen who would have died in the camps along with their parents, Madame." (p. 408).
>
> "Vianne said nothing. She knew the men were giving her time and she both appreciated and hated it. She didn't want to accept any of this. "Daniel – Ari – was born a week before Marc left for the war. He has no memory of either of his parents. It was the safest way – to let him believe he was my son."
>
> "But he is not your son, Madame." Lerner's voice was gentle but the words were like the lash of a whip.
>
> "I promised Rachel I would keep him safe," she said.
>
> "And you have. But now it is time for Ari to return to his family. To his people."
>
> "He won't understand," she said.
>
> "Perhaps not," Lerner said. "Still."
>
> Vianne looked at Antoine for help. "We love him. He's part of our family. He should stay with us. You want him to stay, don't you Antoine?"
>
> Her husband nodded solemnly.
>
> She turned to the men. "We could adopt him, raise him as our own. But Jewish, of course. We will tell him who he is and take him to the synagogue and –"
>
> "Madame," Lerner said with a sigh.
>
> Phillipe approached Vianne, took her hands in his. "We know you love him and he loves you. We know that Ari is too young to understand and that he will cry and miss you – perhaps for years."
>
> "But you want to take him anyway."
>
> "You look at the heartbreak of one boy. I am here because of the heartbreak of my people. You understand?" His face sagged, his mouth curved into a small frown. "Millions of Jews were killed in this war, Madame. Millions." He let that sink in. "An entire generation is gone. We need to band together now, those few of us who are left; we need to rebuild. One boy with no memory of who he was may seem a small thing to lose, but to us, he is the future." (pp. 414-415).
>
> Vianne bent down to look him in the eye. "You need to go now, Daniel. Trust Maman."
>
> His lower lip trembled. He clutched the toy to his chest. "Oui, Maman."

> "Be a good boy."
>
> Phillipe leaned over and shut the door.
>
> Daniel launched himself at the window, pressing his palms to the glass. He was crying now, yelling, "Maman! Maman!" They could hear his screams for minutes after the automobile was gone.
>
> Vianne said quietly, "Have a good life, Ari de Champlain." (p.418).

Vianne, as an older woman, looks back at her life and tells the story, which her son (the product of that rape by the SS officer) does not know (Note 1). Like so many stories of Jewish families in Israel and in the world, the generation of parents (or grandparents) who went through the war does not share what happened during that time with the next generation. Many chose to continue living their lives without sharing, and their families do not know who they were then at all. But the moment comes, and Vianne meets Ari again, in the presence of her son:

> "I stare at the man before me. In him, I can see the boy I loved so deeply and the woman who was my best friend. "Ariel de Champlain," I say, his name a whisper, a prayer.
>
> He takes me in his arms and holds me tightly and the memories return.
>
> When he finally pulls back, we are both crying.
>
> "I never forgot you or Sophie," he says. "They told me to, and I tried, but I couldn't. I've been looking for you both for years."
>
> I feel that constriction in my heart again. "Sophie passed away about fifteen years ago."
>
> Ari looks away. Quietly, he says, "I slept with her stuffed animal for years." (p.437).
>
> "I hear Julien's intake of breath and know what it means. He has questions now. "Ari is my best friend's son," I say. "When Rachel was deported to Auschwitz, I hid him in our home, even though a Nazi billeted with us. It was quite... frightening."
>
> "Your mother is being modest," Ari says. "She rescued nineteen Jewish children during the war."
>
> I see the incredulity in my son's eyes and it makes me smile. Our children see us so imperfectly.
>
> "Did Dad know?" Julien asks.
>
> "Your father..." I pause, draw in a breath. Your father. And there it is, the secret that made me bury it all.' (p.438) (Note 2).

3.2 The Velvet Hours

The Velvet Hours, by Alyson Richman, was published in 2016, and discusses the rescue of a Jewish family from France by a girl who was born to a Jewish mother but who had lived her entire life as a Catholic – by the sale of an antique Passover Haggadah that her mother had bequeathed to her (Note 3)**.**

Solange, a young girl, finds in her grandmother, Marthe, an endless mine of inspiration for the novel she will write. A little while later, Solange's father is conscripted to the army, and Marthe generously offers Solange a room in her house. Solange moves in with her, and the relationship somewhat stabilizes when Solange tells Marthe about her dead mother, who was a book-lover and a Jewess. One day Solange goes to a store selling used books, that specializes in valuing and restoring rare books, where she meets Alex, a young Jew, whose father owns the store. They fall in love, get engaged, and run away from Paris together, thanks to a particularly rare and expensive Passover Haggadah that belonged to Solange's mother. She is now forced to sell it to save herself and her new, Jewish, family from the Nazis, and buy tickets to sail from Marseille to South America. Solange has harsh feelings about those who needed to remain behind due to their children's sickness:

> At that point, we had no idea of places like Auschwitz or Treblinka. We left Marseille convincing ourselves that somehow Solomon and his family would find a way to get their visas before our ship departed from Lisbon. And should that not happen, they'd find a way to keep safe... For we all knew that it was he who had restored the damaged Haggadah. It was he who, in the end, had really saved us. His sacrifice, made so quietly and without drama, was lost on no one. (pp. 360-361).

The rare Haggadah – the book that saved an entire family – conceals a unique love story connected with the fate of the Jew. The Haggadah was written hundreds of years earlier by a rabbi and his wife, who knew how to paint unique illustrations in gold leaf. This is the sole copy that was published, and Solange owns it. The author sacrifices the Jewish book restorer, an assistant in a bookstore, who together with his family is prevented from boarding the ship that can save them just before the Nazi invasion, due to his son's illness. The book is based on a central motif – objects that can express moments and preserve memories are those that remain after us and serve as a reminder. Judaism always speaks

about man eventually returning to dust, and therefore possessions seemingly are of no significance. But the book challenges the maxim that objects are insignificant.

The story is written on different levels that simultaneously include true events and stories, on which the plot – that moves between reality and fiction – is based. There are two other levels in parallel: the hidden and revealed levels. The hidden level is the Barcelona Haggadah, the Haggadah that will save an entire family at the end of the story, and that symbolizes the story of the Exodus from Egypt of the Jewish nation, compared to the story of the Jewish nation in the Second World War. The story of the Exodus begins with the Israelites going down to Egypt and being slaves there during a centuries-long exile. Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, commands that every Hebrew boy who is born should be thrown into the Nile. This is the first anti-Semitic order, that leads the voice of anti-Semitism up until Hitler, the time the story is set in, up until the present day. The story has three sides, symbolizing the pyramids that the Israelites built as slaves in Egypt. The first facet is the Exile (the historical Egyptian exile and the exile of the Jews of France during the time of the story); the second is the ruling tyrant (Pharaoh or Hitler), and the third is the granddaughter:

> That afternoon, I went into the guest bedroom where I had been staying and unwrapped the Haggadah. I held it in my hands. Its weight had always felt substantial to me, but now it seemed even heavier, infused with a deeper meaning. I looked over the illustrations once again, lifting the dry, yellowed pages one by one... As I continued to turn the pages, the story of the Israelites' journey from Egypt was not lost on me. If Monsieur Armel managed to negotiate the sale of the Haggadah, I knew the money would be used toward our own exodus. (pp.323-327).

The Passover Haggadah has one sole goal – to relate [the story of the Exodus] to your son. This is the historic command. But, in this story, there is no one to tell it to Solange. There is no one to connect her to her ancient, glorious Jewish past; there is no one to expand and enrich her knowledge about her Jewish roots, and there is no one to strengthen her Jewish identity. Therefore, Solange feels orphaned from her mother, and orphaned from her people. She is forced to go and search out her roots by herself. Her search for her mother's antique books evokes the search by candlelight for leaven performed by every Jew on the evening before Passover. Here, too, the symbolic layer connects with the one of the story. Solange finds the antique Haggadah written by Rabbi Avram (in the Jewish historical context, the name of the founder of the entire Jewish people) and searches for a bookstore, so that they would be able to tell her what was written in it, what this book is. She goes into a Jewish-owned bookstore. Here, Solange's connection begins with the Jewish nation, with her past and roots. She could have chosen a professional bookstore with a non-Jewish owner. But by an act of holding the ancient Haggadah, and allowing her feet tosomehow carry themselves and lead her to a Jewish bookstore, she ties her fate to that of the Jewish nation. In that store she finds her past roots and also her future love. When Solange speaks to her father and is worried about the Nazi invasion of France, her father calms her and tells her that France does not record a person's religious identity. But when she searches for her birth certificate, her mother's maiden name appears there: Cohen. An obviously Jewish name, that also connects the nation's past and the story's present – a Cohen was a priest in the Temple. They were chosen to serve the people after the Exodus. They were given the mission of connecting the nation with its God. Solange, a descendant of a priestly family, begins to search for her purpose and mission in the world, like the Cohen in the ancient past of the nation to which she belongs. If we thought for a moment, that Solange was in danger of assimilation due to her father's religion and grandmother's stories, her surname of Cohen subconsciously forces her to look for a Jewish husband, since the priests were forbidden to marry whoever they pleased – they were a tribe who preserved their lineage. They had to maintain the purity of their surname and therefore married only Jews, and a Cohen was even forbidden to marry a divorced Jewish woman.

The Velvet Hours also incorporates the story of Marthe, Solange's grandmother. Her story is that of impossible love to Charles, a rich, married man, who kept her as his mistress. Marthe used most of the money she received from him to develop a love of art and endless collection of beautiful ornaments for her home. The drive to collect skipped her granddaughter, Solange, but while the grandmother collected *objets d'art* for her own self-satisfaction and to display, her granddaughter uses a collector's item to save lives. Grandmother's unrealized and illegal love story is counterbalanced by two stories that purify and atone: the love story of Rabbi Avram and his wife who worked side-by-side for twenty years to create the Haggadah, and the love story of Solange and her sweetheart, the son of the Jewish bookstore owner. These love stories did not feature luxury or an exorbitantly expensive sets of pearls, but they did contain true, holy, love, of joint writing and illustration of a book that is identified more than any other with the Jewish nation, and of the innocent love of a young Jewish man and woman who care about the fate of other Jews and try to save them, with Solange relinquishing an emotionally and financially valuable item, the antique Hagaddah, until she was filled with joy:

"I'm so happy my mother left me such an important gift. Who knew one book could save so many lives?" (p.326).

Marthe's set of pearls also symbolizes the Exodus from Egypt. When she receives it, she is told the pearls are harvested

from the bottom of the sea. The sea is connected to the Exodus – both the sea splitting in two and the Israelites passing through, and it returning on the Egyptians who drowned in it. They were within an inch of death at the Red Sea, and within an inch of death in Solange's story of rescue. Another symbolic dimension of the string of pearls is the idea of threading pearls one by one into a long string. Just as one generation and then another is added to the string of generations from the exile to Egypt to the exile to France and until modern times. Solange doesn't dare break this chain. She wants to add her pearl and tighten the knot well:

"I looked around the room and felt that I had been absorbed into the most extraordinary family. My heart was full. For the pages of the Haggadah were no longer just ink and vellum to me. They had sprung to life, a narrative continuing before my very eyes." (p.355).

4. Discussion

The deeds of Vianne (*The Nightingale*) and Solange (*The Velvet Hours*) are, seemingly, small. But they are in line with Maimonides's philosophy of human behavior, originating in the Talmud. This in itself is an earlier version of Chaos Theory, known primarily as the Butterfly Effect, described by meteorologist Edward Lorenz in 1963. This maintains that a butterfly flapping its wings in Australia can cause a tornado in Kansas or monsoon rains in Indonesia. The chains of cause and effect in complex systems are so intertwined that they do not create any natural balance. Therefore, there is no way to predict the results of an event. Small actions can produce enormous results.

This also illustrates the hope shaped by Judaism: a refusal to concede regarding lofty ideals, but also a refusal to say, in a world where evil still twists it, that the world has been saved. "There is work still to be done, the journey is not yet complete, and it depends on us: we who now all too briefly stride upon the stage of time" (Sacks, 2005).

Essentially, Vianne and Solange were in the right place at the right time and acted according to their worldview and their courageous decisions, without thinking too much about social norms. According to Jewish religious perspective and faith, just as every person has a task to fulfill in his life, every day brings its own opportunity. "If we are where we are because God wants us to be, then there must be in every situation, something he wants us to do, some act of redemption he wants us to perform" (Sacks, 2005, p. 273).

Studies by Nechama Tec (1984, 1993) about those who saved Jews in Poland, showed that most acted on their own and not as a collective, and preferred to determine their own norms of behavior during the times when they operated, without investing more thought in it or in the accepted norms of the period. In contrast, the study by Samuel Oliner (2008) shows that the rescuers were certainly integrated in society and while most people just said that they needed to take action, but didn't, the rescuers acted, frequently without saying anything. The two researchers agree that the rescuers were endowed with tolerance, compassion, caring, and involvement. They didn't make a conscious decision to save others, but mostlysuddenly found themselves in a situation that compelled them to quickly make a decision, and they often acted instinctively rather than after deep thought. It was altruism for its own sake coming from a person with a well-developed conscience and high-level values, with its repercussions meaning life or death for the rescued person. According to the two researchers, this saving life by the Righteous Among the Nations proves that at a time of crisis or war, people may risk their own lives to maintain their principle of the sanctity of life (Note 4).

Vianne and Solange, the heroines of the two novels, had freedom of choice. Their concern and caring for others led them both to act humanely while employing ethics of personal responsibility, when both saw that collective responsibility would not save others. The first question usually asked in ethics lectures is, "Why be ethical?" Why not be like most people who, when walking in the street and encountering other people's troubles, are selfish, egocentric, and indifferent? Vianne and Solange did not ask themselves for a moment – Why me? They were two ordinary women, who didn't think that they were doing anything special. They didn't see themselves as holy, but even so, they saved lives and eased suffering. It could be said that the sacrifice of Vianne – who had no connection with Judaism – from *The Nightingale*, was even greater than that of Solange, from *The Velvet Hours*, who was of Jewish origin.

5. Summary

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve," said Martin Luther King. "Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile," said Albert Einstein. "Someone who wishes to ensure the good of others, has already ensured his own good," said Confucius. And Edmond Burke said, "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little."

> The paradox of altruism is that the hope we give others returns to us undiminished and enlarged. Perhaps faith is only created in the doing, happiness in the giving and meaning in the courage to take risks for the sake of an ideal. All I know is that the greatest achievement in life is to have been, for one other person, even for one moment, an agent of hope. (Sacks, 2005, p. 282).

This article has discussed the characters of two young women, Solange and Vianne, during the Second World War

period, as they are reflected in two historical novels, *The Velvet Hours* and *The Nightingale* and their daring deeds – each in her small Godly part – to save Jews from the terrors of the Nazi occupation. We also saw that sacrifice for others is the product of personal responsibility, ethics, and the decision of one fateful moment.

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Notes

Note 1. The theme of an unwanted pregnancy during the Second World War period in France, connected with simple people (farmers, ordinary citizens) helping and rescuing Jews and orphaned Jews, also appears in *Sa habaitahyanki*in which Prof. Henri Vesht tells Yanki about his research in Paris: "I came to research the topic I have named "rape with consent". I studied the phenomenon of the increase male sexual brutality during wartime, and the mechanism that allows women to survive it" (Miron, 2017, pp.143, 148).

Note 2. Pastor André Trocmé was the charismatic, independent-thinking spiritual leader of the Protestant congregation in the village of Le Chambon, who viewed the Jews as "the people of the Bible". Trocmé said in a sermon in 1942, delivered after the Jews were deported from Paris: "The Christian Church should drop to its knees and beg pardon of God for its present incapacity and cowardice." Immediately afterwards, he began to take action. Together with his wife, Magda, and despite the fact that they then had seven small children, Trocmé began, at tremendous risk, to hide Jews in the homes of believers from his congregation. The Trocmés found hundreds of families who agreed to hide Jews in their homes. They were hidden in private homes, on farms, and in public institutions such as orphanages and boarding schools. Many of those hidden were children who were separated from their families. For around three years, the residents of Le Chambon took care of the Jews in hiding, brought them food, drink, clothing, and often also acquired false identities and forged identity cards for them, helping many cross the border into Switzerland, where other Protestant believers were waiting for them. Trocmé and several other pastors who operated in the area were arrested by the Nazis under suspicion of helping hide Jews, but were released after a short time. Trocmé's cousin, Daniel, who directed the orphanage in Le Chambon, was arrested by the Nazis in 1943, sent to Buchenwald together with many children that he hid, and died there. See the book: *Harhekmiktzehha'olamyesh li ima: Eduyotshelyeladimmustarim*(Miran, 2010) which includes the account of the rescue of tens of thousands of Jewish children in France, 1939 - 1945. Likewise, the Izieuorphanage in Toulouse, where dozens of Jewish orphaned children were saved during the Second World War, in *Sahabaitah, yanki* (Miron, 2017, pp. 184, 232-235).

Note 3. Most of Richman's books up until now have included mention of the Holocaust in some or other manner. Such as her novel, *The Lost Wife*, that describes a husband and wife who were separated in the concentration camps and who were reunited decades later at their grandchildren's wedding.

Note 4. Two other novels on a similar theme to the novels discussed in this article are *Sarah's Key*(De Rosnay, 2007). Paris, July 1942. Ten-year-old Sarah and her family are arrested by the Nazis during the Vel' d'Hiv Roundup. Before the police take them, Sarah locks her little brother, Michel, in their favorite hiding place, the closet in their room. She keeps the key, thinking that she will be back within a few hours. And "The Story of Gilber Bloom" by Naomi Morgenstern (2007) from her book *Bamistor – YeladimBatekufatHaShoahBeTzarfat*, that describes the life of a boyduring the Second World War in France, who was rescued by a rural family at risk to their own lives.